CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

In everyday communication, sometimes we find a listener who does not clearly attend the speaker. This situation can be annoying for the speaker and can effect on the bad relationship. Hence, it is important for the listeners to give some signals which indicating that he pays attention to the speaker, for example, the use of response tokens like *yeah* or *oh*. By uttering response tokens, the speaker will think that he/she is respected.

Harris et al. (1975) said that giving those signals' function is not only as constructing and consolidating social relations but as strategic mechanisms for creating transitions into and out of transactional talk. Another opinion is conveyed by McCarthy (2003). He said that the responses are not something that just sits in the gaps between transactional episodes but actually facilitates the speakers and enhances their efficiency. This issue becomes one aspect of spoken interactions that has been examined by conversation analyst. It is the ways a speaker and another (other) speaker(s) provide each other with feedback.

Feedback is the ways in which listeners show they are attending to what is being said. This can be done, for example, by the use of response tokens such as 'mm' and 'yeah', by paraphrasing what the other persons has just said, or through body position and the use of eye contact (Paltridge 2006).

Giving feedback by uttering response tokens can be achieved if the speaker holds the floor. Holding the floor, as Young and Lee stated (2004),

means a speaker continues to speak and the other participants in the conversation choose not to take turns. However, the listener is not silent. A turn of speaker is not only constructed by the speaker him/herself, but also the listener. The listener contributes to the turn by uttering words like 'mm', 'okay' or 'yeah' and also by gestures including head movements such as nodding.

Response Tokens, based on the research of McCarthy (2003), are short utterances consists of a syllable, or a word, a phrase or a small sentence which uttered as a response of the primary speaker. Gardner (2005) said that they are difficult to describe, because most of them lack meaning in the standard common dictionary like Oxford dictionary. Response tokens often stand alone in a turn as single items. Because of that difficulty, Gardner (2005) also stated that not many researchers considered response tokens as their object of research. It is further provided by a fact that even linguists interested in pragmatics and language-in use have struggled to provide adequate and convincing descriptions of response tokens. He added that this is especially true of more conventional linguistic approaches to the study of a language in some regions.

Gardner (2005) said that the most widely used term is probably 'minimal responses'. In his book, he includes the sub-types of 'minimal responses' such as continuers, acknowledgement and newsmarkers into response tokens. Yngve (1970)'s term of 'backchannels' which includes not only minimal tokens but also clarification questions is also included in Gardner' book (2005) as response tokens.

There is an argument conveyed by McCarthy (1991) about the practical use of response tokens. He said that if we use response tokens like *yeah* or *mm* with the purpose of giving attention to the speaker, we cannot use those words to interrupt the speaker, thus wait until the speaker finish his/her talk. McCarthy said that it is linguistic means of not taking the turn when one has the opportunity, or simply of making it clear to the speaker that we are attending to the message.

Response tokens cannot be used to initiate a conversation. It requires common expectations among participants about its appropriateness and a common willingness to take part in the talk. Response token, though thematically considered unimportant, is an essential aspect of conversation in that it provides a means of 'easing things along' (Schneider 1988).

People cannot arrange the amount of response tokens in their talk. They occurs naturally where in one sequence of conversation there are many response tokens but in another sequence of talk they hardly appear. This is proved in a research conducted by Jefferson (1984) in Gardner (2005). She found that some speakers of English use both *Hmm* and *Yeah*, whilst others use very few *Hmms*.

A research by Gardner (2005) has found that each response tokens is used in different ways from others, and that each is a variable, multifunctional token in its own right. Gardner said that this variability can be extreme, to the extent that speakers regularly utter nonce words such as *Nyem*, *Nyuh*, which appear to be blends of more standard versions - like *hmm or huh* - of the tokens.

The object of this response tokens research that examined is Waiting for Godot drama written by Samuel Beckett. It was aired first on 5 January 1953 in the Théâtre de Babylone, Paris (Wikipedia). This drama becomes phenomenal since it represents a hopeless real life, which the main characters always wait for a miracle and do nothing until the story comes to the end. The conversation below is the example of the small utterances or response tokens in the drama:

Estragon: I can't have been listening

Vladimir: Oh ... nothing very definite.

Estragon: A kind of prayer.

Vladimir: Precisely.

Estragon: A vague supplication.

Vladimir: Exactly.

There are three purposes that become the writer's interest to make research on this field. First, response tokens can be ambiguous depend on the context. It means that the speaker can use different response tokens for a same purpose and the speaker can use a same type of response token for different purpose. Second, the study of response tokens is applicable and it is the most appropriate study in the object of this research. Last, since many studies of conversation focus on turn taking (Some signals and Rules for Taking Speaking Turns in Conversation by Duncan 2011; Turn-taking in Japanese Conversation: A Study in Gramar and Interaction by Tanaka 1999) and adjacency pairs (Significance of Adjacency Pairs as Building Blocks of Social Interaction by Garratt 2009; Analysing Conversational Data with Regards to Interactional Structures: Turn-Taking and Adjacency Pairs, also Face and Authority by Mullins 2012), the study of verbal

behavior of the listeners by producing response tokens is rarely used by researchers.

The rarity of listener's feedback by using response tokens study has been proven in Gardner's book (2005). He said that in pragmatics, most work has focused on speakers, for example in the speech act tradition (e.g. Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1979, 1992) in (Gardner 2005), Gricean pragmatics (e.g. Grice 1975) in Gardner (2005), and politeness theory (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1988) in Gardner (2005), though there is also a focus on hearer-oriented speech acts in the last of these (Gardner 2005).

The writer discusses Waiting for Godot as the object because this drama is unique. Unique here means there are many small utterances which most of them consist of only one word and they are produced by characters especially the main characters, Vladimir and Estragon. This explains why the writer only uses their utterance to dig the source of data.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

The study tries to investigate response tokens used by Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. Specifically, this research answers the following questions:

1. What are kinds of response tokens uttered by the main characters in Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett?

2. What are the functions of those response tokens in Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to describe paying attention signals in Waiting for Godot referenced specially to Vladimir and Estragon. Specifically, the study tries to accomplish the following objectives:

- 1. To describe kinds of response tokens uttered by the main characters in Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett
- 2. To explain the functions of each response tokens also by considering the context

1.4. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study is intended to find out how the interlocutors provide response signals by uttering response tokens. The researcher hopes the research provides knowledge of practical use and functions of uttering response tokens. The researcher also expects that this research makes the readers understand when they appropriately use response tokens and hence the relationship between two speakers will be maintained. Practically, the writer hopes this research inspires the readers, arouses curiosity and interest to other linguists. The writer also hopes that Indonesian students are encouraged to discuss this topic, since the study of response tokens are barely observed by students and researchers in Indonesia.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

There are some discussions of discourse analysis which researchers can take; they are Adjacency pairs, turn-taking and opening and closing in conversation. However, this research only uses the theory of the response tokens type by McCarthy (2003) and the theory of response tokens functions by Gardner (2005) to examine the conversation by Vladimir and Estragon that uses response tokens. The writer also limits the examined characters. It is only Vladimir and Estragon since they appear in the whole drama and utter most response tokens, which raised the writer's interest to make this drama an object for the research.

1.6. Definitions of Key Terms

a. Response Tokens

Response Tokens, based on the research of McCarthy (2003), are short utterances consists of a syllable, or a word, a phrase or a small sentence which uttered as a response of the primary speaker. They are produced by an interlocutor who is playing a listener's role during the other interlocutor's speakership. Response tokens cannot be used as initiate in conversation.

b. Waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot according to http://:wikipedia.com is a drama written by Samuel Beckett. It was first aired with the original title *En Attendant Godot* at 5 January 1953 in Paris. The characters are Vladimir, Estragon, Lucky, Pozzo, a boy and Godot.

c. Vladimir and Estragon

Vladimir and Estragon are two main characters in Waiting for Godot drama. They are two vagrants who hang their hope in someone named Godot. They believe that Godot can solve their life problem. While waiting, they wander aimlessly, talk with people they meet. However, Godot does not come and never come.

